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TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PREL](#) [PINR](#) [KISL](#) [SA](#)
SUBJECT: MIRA LEADER CITES RELIGIOUS DUTY AS REASON FOR SAG
OPPOSITION

REF: RIYADH 932

Classified By: Deputy Chief of Mission Michael Gfoeller
for reasons 1.4(b) and (d).

¶1. (S) SUMMARY: London-based Saudi extremist leader and head of the Movement for Islamic Reform in Arabia (MIRA) Sa'ad al-Faqih in continuing his public appeal for Kingdom-wide support against the Saudi government (SAG). In recent months, al-Faqih has attempted to utilize tribal ties to rally support for his cause and call for protests inside the Kingdom (reftel). However, in his May and June television broadcasts on London-based television channel Al-Islah, al-Faqih changed his approach, reverting to religious arguments, commending the Commission for the Promotion of Virtue and Prevention of Vice and claiming that "opposition to the Saudi rule is a duty because they have breached God's laws." Al-Faqih's new tactics, which have flip-flopped several times in the past year, appear to be indicative of a general lack of support for his efforts. END SUMMARY.

¶2. (C) London-based Saudi extremist leader and head of the Movement for Islamic Reform in Arabia (MIRA) Sa'ad al-Faqih called on his followers ("Islahists") to oppose the SAG, claiming "opposition to the Saudi rulers is a duty because they have breached God's laws." (Note: Al-Faqih has used religion to call for opposition protests in the past. Most notably, in an unsuccessful 2004 uprising attempt in a central Riyadh mosque, al-Faqih called for stricter Islamic institutions in the Kingdom. End Note.) In his May 21 broadcast, al-Faqih gave a lecture on "God's Universal Laws" dealing with justice, security, stability, corruption, and vice-- the key principles upon which MIRA opposes the SAG. He stated that "breaching God's Universal Laws will bring divine punishment upon people." He then told his fellow Islahists that the SAG has breached these laws, and therefore they must oppose the SAG.

¶3. (C) This religious call upon the Islahists was reinforced during al-Faqih's May 26 broadcast in which he commended the work of the Commission for the Promotion of Virtue and Prevention of Vice ("Commission"), despite recent media criticism and public outcry against its excesses (septel). Al-Faqih stated that the Commission made "great achievements in combating crime, drugs, and spirits." However, he warned his followers that the Commission is harmful to religion because it is employed as a tool of the SAG, and is not a true enforcer of the Islamic principle of censure.

¶4. (U) Al-Faqih also claimed that MIRA's support is finally being demonstrated openly. In the past months, al-Faqih has criticized his followers for not publicly supporting his cause due to unfounded fears of persecution by the SAG. Al-Faqih specifically commended the Islahists of Ha'il and Al-Kharj for their public support and 'wide' attendance at mosque gatherings. (Note: These cities are located in

northern Saudi Arabia in the same areas where his tribal base has come from in the past. End Note.) As a 'reward' for this behavior, al-Faqih granted the Islahists "respite" from the gatherings; there are no more planned protests until July 20, when MIRA is planning region-wide gatherings in opposition to the SAG.

15. (S) COMMENT: Although al-Faqih has managed to keep himself and MIRA in the spotlight, his inability to maintain direction or a concrete following is becoming increasingly apparent. During March and April's broadcasts, he utilized tribal leaders to support his cause in an attempt to demonstrate his strength. However, only weeks later, he reverted to religious arguments, possibly motivated by the lack of response to his tribal rally in earlier months. Based on this lack of focus, it is unlikely that MIRA's July 20 call for regional SAG opposition will have any traction and could therefore put a stop to his renewed claims of increasing support and calls for Kingdom-wide mosque gatherings. END COMMENT.
FRAKER